

Community resources

[Follow us on Twitter](#) [Check our Reddit](#) [Twitter this](#) [Digg this page](#) [Contact us on IRC](#)

courage is contagious

Viewing cable 06BOGOTA224, SWISS AMB ON FARC AND ELN PEACE PROCESS

If you are new to these pages, please read an introduction on the [structure of a cable](#) as well as how to [discuss them](#) with others. See also the [FAQs](#)

Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#06BOGOTA224**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
06BOGOTA224	2006-01-11 21:20	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Bogota

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.semana.com/wikileaks/Seccion/168.aspx>

VZCZCXYZ0006
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHBO #0224/01 0112120
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 112120Z JAN 06
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1109
INFO RUEHSW/AMEMBASSY BERN 0968
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 6468
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 7018
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ JAN LIMA 3093
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 8768
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO 0286
RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA 8668
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0768
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 3691
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1327
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUMIAAA/USCINCSO MIAMI FL

id: 49555
date: 1/11/2006 21:20
refid: 06BOGOTA224

origin: Embassy Bogota
classification: CONFIDENTIAL
destination: 05BOGOTA12031|06BOGOTA65
header:
VZCZCXYZ0006
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHBO #0224/01 0112120
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 112120Z JAN 06
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1109
INFO RUEHSW/AMEMBASSY BERN 0968
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 6468
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 7018
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ JAN LIMA 3093
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 8768
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO 0286
RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA 8668
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0768
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 3691
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1327
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUMIAAA/USCINCSO MIAMI FL

----- header ends -----

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 000224

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/11/2016
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [CO](#)
SUBJECT: SWISS AMB ON FARC AND ELN PEACE PROCESS

REF: A) BOGOTA 65 B) 05 BOGOTA 12031

Classified By: Ambassador William B. Wood, Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. Swiss Ambassador Kupfer expressed disappointment on January 6 with the FARC's rejection of the Swiss-led international commission proposal for a humanitarian exchange between the GOC and the FARC. He reported that, despite the setback, international commission members (one from France, Spain and Switzerland) would meet again with the FARC in Colombia in early 2006 to continue discussions on the same proposal. Kupfer said coordinating the commission was going along fine for now but the French continued to do as they pleased. He cited the January 3 announcement that French Foreign Minister Douste-Blazy would travel to Colombia to discuss efforts to release Colombian-French Ingrid Betancourt. Kupfer said this was news to both the Swiss and Spanish. He also said GOC Peace Commissioner Restrepo was a challenge to deal with and that, unlike past humanitarian exchange initiatives, the Catholic Church had little involvement in this one. Kupfer represented Switzerland, one of the three accompanying countries, at the GOC-ELN exploratory talks last month in Havana. He said round two later in January would focus on an agenda for future talks, and that the roles of the five civil society guarantors and the three countries would have to be re-defined. He predicted the GOC will want less involvement; the ELN more. He said Norway and the ELN pressed for moving the talks to Europe. According to Kupfer, the ELN is looking to challenge its placement on the EU terrorist list and wants to explore funding opportunities in Europe. In the end, both the ELN and GOC agreed to keep the talks in Havana for now. Kupfer underscored that, while the Swiss were happy to go along with that, they would support moving the talks to Europe if they advanced sufficiently, to enhance their legitimacy. The ELN's placement on the EU terrorist list would prove no obstacle to Switzerland if the circumstances

were right. End Summary.

HUMANITARIAN EXCHANGE PROPOSAL

¶2. (C) On January 6, polcouns met with Swiss Ambassador Thomas Kupfer to discuss FARC rejection of an humanitarian prisoner exchange proposal (ref a), put forward by the recently assembled "international commission" with representatives from France, Switzerland, and Spain. Kupfer expressed disappointment with the FARC reaction, which he characterized as a "clear and categorical no." He said it was difficult to find anything positive in the FARC's Dec. 29 communique, and complained that the FARC's leaders were playing politics. First they complained they did not have the details of the proposal (which Kupfer said they received weeks earlier on December 15 along with the GOC), and then they complained they were not accorded sufficient respect when it was presented (i.e. by email). Kupfer insisted that the proposal was a good one. "They were stupid to reject it because they will only have to back down later," he said.

¶3. (C) Despite the setback and low chance of success, Kupfer said the GOC and the FARC leadership had agreed to another meeting in Colombia "at the technical level" between international commission members and the FARC early in 2006, perhaps in January. He noted that "difficulties with organizational details" still needed to be resolved, including the FARC's insistence that the GOC not know where or when the meeting would take place. Kupfer stressed that the FARC's attitude was unrealistic and that they had to show more transparency. He said upcoming discussions would be based on the proposal already rejected by the FARC.

IMPACT ON U.S. HOSTAGES

¶4. (C) Even if both parties finally agreed to discuss the possibility of a humanitarian exchange, Kupfer said the challenges would be overwhelming. FARC negotiators have added the return of Simon Trinidad and Sonia (both extradited to the U.S.) as critical to any deal. Kupfer speculated that the FARC would probably try holding back one or more Americans in any exchange, something the GOC had refused to consider. And finally, said Kupfer, the FARC still had not decided which FARC prisoners held by the GOC could be part of any humanitarian exchange.

DEALING WITH THE FRENCH, THE GOC; THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH

¶5. (C) According to Kupfer, Switzerland has the coordinating lead among the three countries on commission initiatives but reining in the French continues to be a challenge. "The French generally do what they want," he said. The latest surprise was the January 3 announcement out of Paris that Foreign Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy would visit Colombia soon to discuss efforts to release Ingrid Betancourt. Kupfer complained that Douste-Blazy would presumably not come without a new bilateral initiative, something neither the Swiss nor Spanish knew anything about. The only bright spot, said Kupfer, was that Spain planned to be much more engaged in the process.

¶6. (C) Kupfer acknowledged that dealing with the GOC, in particular with Peace Commissioner Restrepo, continued to be a challenge. Restrepo's attitude and style were difficult. He was too forthright and stubborn, unwilling to take advice. While everyone was more or less in agreement on the role of the international commission, Kupfer was convinced Restrepo would seek to limit its involvement when "it could be the most useful." Kupfer concluded that Restrepo had little experience in dealing with international community facilitators and this would complicate matters in any future negotiation.

¶17. (C) Kupfer noted with surprise that, unlike past initiatives, the Catholic Church was minimally involved with the initiative of the international commission. He surmised that relations between Church negotiator Monsignor Castro and the presidential palace, in particular Restrepo, were not good. At the same time, he acknowledged that the Church remained skeptical the FARC would agree to anything while Uribe is president, an argument strengthened by the FARC's most recent communiqu (ref b).

GOC-ELN ENCOUNTER IN HAVANA

¶18. (C) Kupfer, who attended the December talks in Havana, was more optimistic about exploratory discussions between the GOC and the ELN, which will resume later this month. Restrepo will meet with the ELN's Francisco Galan on January 11 to prepare for a second round of talks. Kupfer said all the goals were achieved during the first round: a dialogue was launched, confidence building began, and a follow-on meeting was set. Both parties "prudently" avoided trying to create problems for the other. Round two will still be "exploratory" and tackle the agenda for future talks. He noted that in Havana the ELN commander Antonio Garcia at first appeared distant and uninformed about the reality of present day Colombia, but is now thoroughly engaged in the process. Kupfer reported that Galan was more confident than in previous encounters and exhibited less need to take cues from Garcia. Kupfer said Evo Morales' election victory in Bolivia gave the ELN negotiating team a psychological boost as well.

¶19. (C) Kupfer underscored that the five guarantors were crucial in getting both parties to Havana but their function at the negotiating table would now need to be re-defined into a supporting role. Kupfer predicted that this would be a problem as the five want to continue as major players. What was important now, said Kupfer, was a real facilitator in the process.

¶110. (C) Regarding the three "accompanying" countries (Norway, Spain and Switzerland), Kupfer said their role, too, would have to be clarified, both on the political side as well as on the logistics/accompaniment/facilitation side. The GOC's approach so far has been, "we're glad you're here and we'll call you if we need you." Kupfer said Norway in particular took considerable umbrage at this. The ELN, on the other hand, wanted the three countries more involved as the process develops.

¶111. (C) Kupfer also reported some discussion of Brazil joining as an accompanying country but no decision was taken. He stressed that the minimal role played by Cuba and Venezuela, the former as host and the latter as facilitator for Garcia's travel, was also helpful. It is better to have them involved this way than sabotaging the process from the outside, he said.

¶112. (C) According to Kupfer, Norway pressed hard for a European venue for the second round; Switzerland and Spain did not. The ELN supported Norway, preferring to travel to Europe for political and financial reasons. Kupfer said the ELN complained several times about their terrorist designation status and wanted a European venue to challenge it. The ELN also made clear that Europe contained opportunities for future funding needs. In the end, the ELN agreed to keep the talks in Cuba, as did the GOC. Kupfer underscored that, while Bern was happy to go along with the Cuban venue for now, they would support moving to Europe if the talks advanced sufficiently, to enhance legitimacy and chances for success. The EU designation of the ELN as a terrorist group would prove no obstacle to Switzerland.

COMMENT

¶13. (C) For now, U.S. redlines are covered, in particular with the FARC initiative, as the GOC continues to insist that all American hostages be part of any exchange. However, we will continue to monitor both processes closely as France and Switzerland in particular, may begin pressing the GOC to make further concessions to keep the initiative with the FARC alive. We agree with the pessimistic assessment of the Catholic Church that the odds for a humanitarian exchange between the GOC and the FARC remain low.

WOOD

=====CABLE ENDS=====